

POLICE OF WASHINGTON CITY—ERECTING LAMPS.

[To accompany bills H. R. Nos. 468 and 469.]

MAY 30, 1842.

MR. UNDERWOOD, from the Committee for the District of Columbia, submitted the following

REPORT :

The Committee for the District of Columbia submit the following report:

The President, in his message of December last, called the attention of Congress to the subject of establishing "an efficient police" for the protection of the public buildings in the city of Washington. There can be no doubt that it is the duty of Congress to provide for the preservation of the public edifices erected in this city, at much expense, and for the security of the valuable papers and archives belonging to the Government, which are deposited in them. The provision heretofore made has consisted of a guard, or a number of watchmen appointed to take care of the several Executive buildings and Capitol. It seems, from the Official Register published in 1841, that there are employed, in the several Executive buildings and Capitol, the number of watchmen, and at the aggregate compensation following :

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| State Department, 3 watchmen, at a cost of | \$1,250 | per annum, (page 2.) |
| 1 superintendent, at a cost of | 250 | " " (page 2.) |
| Patent Office, 2 watchmen, at a cost of | 865 | " " (page 405.) |
| Treasury Department, 4 watchmen, at a cost of | 1,600 | " " (page 15.) |
| 1 superintendent, at a cost of | 500 | " " (page 14.) |
| War Department, 4 watchmen, at a cost of | 2,000 | " " (page 116.) |
| 1 superintendent, at a cost of | 250 | " " (page 116.) |
| Navy Department, 2 watchmen, at a cost of | 1,000 | " " (page 142.) |

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| Total for Executive buildings - | 7,715 |
| Capitol, 5—a principal and 4 assistants, at a cost of | 5,850 |

13,565

The above estimate includes \$600 paid for a day watch in the National Gallery, and it is placed under the head "temporary." Should this be deducted, it will leave \$12,965 as the sum annually paid to superintendents and watchmen, for their care of the public buildings. Under the system which has heretofore prevailed, the War, the Treasury, and the General Post Office buildings, have been consumed by fire. Under these facts, it would seem that the watch provided was not very efficient in preventing

destructive fires. Your committee believe that the most favorable position to place a watch, with a view to guard against incendiaries, is on the outside of the building, and to relieve them occasionally through the night. It is believed that the watchmen at present employed pass their nights within instead of the outside of the buildings. It is highly probable that an adequate exterior watch, or police, would have saved from destruction all these buildings, and thus prevented the immense loss sustained by the Government from those successive conflagrations.

It is well known that persons of ill fame congregate in this city, during the sittings of Congress, with a view to depredate upon those assembled here at such times. Members of Congress, their constituents having business at the seat of Government, Executive officers, the representatives of foreign Powers located here, and resident citizens, are liable to suffer from the crimes of thieves, incendiaries, and burglars. The committee are of opinion that the safety of all may be secured, in a very great degree, by establishing a police for the city. The burden of such an establishment ought not to fall exclusively upon the citizens of Washington. Perhaps they should bear a portion of the necessary expense, should a very large guard be provided, with a view to patrol nightly the whole city. But burdened as the city now is with a large debt, the interest on which consumes about half the annual revenue—a debt incurred, in part, for the improvement of the city, thereby making it more convenient and comfortable for all those employed by or having business with the Government—your committee have not deemed it proper to require any contribution from the city to support the police which they propose to establish. The total expense of superintending and watching the public buildings, under the system now in operation, is, as before shown, at least \$12,965. The expense of the system which your committee recommend only amounts to \$12,850, to wit:

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| The annual salary of the captain of the guard | - | - | \$1,000 |
| Do do lieutenant of the guard | - | - | 750 |
| Do do 5 sergeants, at \$35 per month | - | - | 2,100 |
| Do do 25 men, at 30 per month | - | - | 9,000 |
| Total | | | <u>12,850</u> |

There will not be an additional charge upon the Treasury equal to this sum, because it is proposed to discharge the superintendents and watchmen now employed about the public buildings, with the exception of those at the Capitol. If these were discharged, and their places filled by the new guard, there would be a saving of money to the Treasury. But if the present guard at the Capitol is retained, and also the day watch for the National Gallery, then the discharge of the other superintendents and watchmen would amount to a saving of \$7,115, which, being deducted from the total cost of the new guard, would leave \$5,735 as the increased charge upon the Treasury to establish the new police.

Your committee deem the lighting of the avenue which connects the Capitol with the President's square and public offices, and the lighting of the squares around the Patent Office and General Post Office, and the streets extending from them to the avenue, a measure of importance, connected with the establishment of the new police. This can be done, as they are informed, at an expense not exceeding \$2,500.

To carry into effect the foregoing objects, the committee herewith submit two bills.